

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAPE T 00718 061350Z
ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAPE TOWN 0718

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: US SF PFOR
SUBJ: VISIT OF AMBASSADOR YOUNG TO SOUTH AFRICA

1. DFA SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS FOURIE THIS MORNING, MAY 6, CALLED ME IN TO EXPRESS SAG CONCERN ABOUT IMPLICATIONS OF MEDIA STORIES ON VISIT OF AMBASSADOR YOUNG TO SOUTH AFRICA MAY 20. FOREIGN MINISTER BOTHA HAD FOUND IT NECESSARY TO ISSUE A STATEMENT ON THE MATTER.

2. WITH NEW YORK DATELINE AND CITING "A US OFFICIAL" AS SOURCE, SA MORNING PRESS PROMINENTLY REPORTS AMBASSADOR YOUNG WILL VISIT JOHANNESBURG MAY 19 AND 20 TO MEET BLACK LEADERS, ADDRESS STUDENTS AT WITWATERSRAND UNIVERSITY AND MEET WITH SA BUSINESSMEN. PRESS NOTES VORSTER WILL BE MEETING WITH VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE IN VIENNA AT THE SAME TIME.

3. FOURIE SAID HARRY OPPENHEIMER OF ANGLO-AMERICAN HAD SPOKEN TO BOTHA A WEEK AGO ABOUT AMBASSADOR YOUNG VISITING JOHANNESBURG ON MAY 20 FOR THE WITWATERSRAND SPEAKING ENGAGEMENT AND THE MEETING WITH BUSINESSMEN. BOTHA HAD SAID SUCH A VISIT WOULD POSE NO PROBLEM PROVIDED IT WAS HANDLED THROUGH PROPER CHANNELS. FOURIE
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ALSO REFERRED TO THE MEETING OF SA CHARGE SHERER IN THE DEPT YESTERDAY, MAY 5, WHEN A PROPOSED RESPONSE TO PRESS QUERIES WAS DISCUSSED. THAT RESPONSE, FOURIE SAID, MENTIONED ONLY THE WITS SPEECH AND THE MEETING WITH BUSINESSMEN.

4. I SAID MY UNDERSTANDING OF THE BACKGROUND OF THE

PROPOSED VISIT WAS ROUGHLY THE SAME AS FOURIE'S EXCEPT THAT AMBASSADOR YOUNG HAD EXPRESSED THE HOPE HE WOULD ALSO HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO MEET BLACK LEADERS DURING HIS BRIEF VISIT AND ANGLO-AMERICAN HAD BEEN PREPARED TO BE HELPFUL IN THIS REGARD.

5. FOURIE HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED BY BOTHA TO SAY SAG COULD NOT REMAIN SILENT ABOUT THE IMPLICATION OF THE MEDIA REPORTS THAT AMBASSADOR YOUNG WAS COMING TO SA TO VISIT BLACK LEADERS WHILE THE PM WAS MEETING IN VIENNA WITH VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE. THIS WAS NOT THE SAG UNDERSTANDING OF THE PURPOSE OF THE VISIT, AND PRESS REPORTS MADE IT APPEAR THE SAG WAS SIMPLY BEING IGNORED. THE MINISTER WAS ISSUING THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT WHICH WOULD BE PRECEDED BY AN EXPLANATION OF THE BACKGROUND ALONG THE LINES OF PARA 3 ABOVE: "ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, THE PURPOSES AND BASIS OF THE VISIT IS DIFFERENT FROM THE UNDERSTANDING WE HAD. IT WOULD ALSO APPEAR THAT THE NORMAL CHANNELS WERE NOT USED. IF THAT IS, IN FACT, THE CASE IT WOULD NOT BE CONVENIENT FOR US TO RECEIVE HIM. THESE VIEWS HAVE BEEN COMMUNICATED TO THE USG." COMMENT: UNFORTUNATELY, IT WAS TOO LATE TO URGE BOTHA TO TAKE A DIFFERENT APPROACH; A STATEMENT ALONG THE FOREGOING LINES WAS ALREADY BEING CARRIED BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN PRESS ASSOCIATION (SAPA).

5. SPEAKING "OFF THE RECORD", FOURIE SAID HE WAS SORRY THIS PROBLEM HAD ARISEN AND ESPECIALLY AT THIS PARTICULAR TIME. IT WAS A PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE CONFIDENTIAL

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MATTER FOR THE SAG BECAUSE OF THE "LEGITIMACY" ISSUE. HE VERY MUCH HOPED A SOLUTION COULD BE FOUND. FOURIE EXPRESSED THE "PERSONAL" OPINION THAT THE MATTER "MIGHT" BE HANDLED BY MAKING CLEAR THAT AMBASSADOR YOUNG HAD ACCEPTED INVITATIONS TO SPEAK AT WITS AND MEET WITH SA BUSINESSMEN AND HOPED TIME WOULD ALSO PERMIT MEETINGS WITH OTHER LEADERS, AMONG THEM SOME BLACKS. FOURIE SAID, INCIDENTALLY, HE ASSUMED AMBASSADOR YOUNG WOULD WISH TO SEE ROBERT SOBUKWE.

6. IT WOULD SEEM CLEAR THAT THE SOUTH AFRICANS ARE INDEED SENSITIVE ON THIS MATTER BUT HOPE IT CAN BE SET STRAIGHT IN A WAY WHICH WILL REMOVE THE EMBARRAS-
SMENT THEY FEEL.

7. FOR THE MOMENT WE ARE RESPONDING TO THE MANY PRESS QUERIES WE ARE RECEIVING BY SAYING WE UNDERSTAND AMBASSADOR YOUNG HAS ACCEPTED INVITATIONS TO SPEAK AT WITS AND MEET BUSINESSMEN, BUT WE HAVE AS YET NO

OFFICIAL CONFIRMATION. REGARDING THE BOTHA STATEMENT,
WE HAVE NO COMMENT.NELSON

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